

We claim:-

1. A hydrogel having a floatability where from 40% to 90% of a solution and/or suspension to be thickened is thickened starting from the surface of the liquid and the rest of the solution and/or suspension to be thickened is thickened starting from the bottom of the container.
2. A hydrogel according to claim 1 where the solidification time is less than 120 seconds and/or the blood absorbance is at least 10 g/g.
3. A process for preparing a hydrogel, which comprises aftertreating a dried hydrogel with a hydrophobic compound and if appropriate a hydrophilic compound.
4. A process according to claim 3, wherein the hydrophobic and if appropriate hydrophilic compounds are particles having an average diameter from 0.001 to 10  $\mu\text{m}$ .
5. A process according to claim 3 or 4; wherein the hydrophobic compounds are hydrophobicized silicas or hydrophobicized mixtures of silicas and aluminas.
6. A process according to any one of claims 3 to 5, wherein the hydrophilic compounds are silicas or mixtures of silicas and aluminas.
7. A process according to any one of claims 3 to 6, wherein the hydrogel is additionally aftertreated with a multivalent cation and if appropriate a surfactant.
8. A process according to claim 7, wherein the multivalent cation is an aluminum ion.
9. A process according to claim 7 or 8, wherein the surfactant is a sorbitan ester.
10. A process according to any one of claims 7 to 9, wherein the multivalent cation is metered as an aqueous solution and the surfactant has an HLB value of less than 18.
11. A process according to any one of claims 3 to 10, wherein the aftertreated hydrogel is dried.
12. The use of the hydrogels according to claim 1 or 2 for absorbing blood and/or body fluids or for thickening aqueous solutions and/or suspensions.
13. The use of the hydrogels according to claim 1 or 2 for thickening medical wastes.

14. The use according to claim 12 in hygiene articles.
15. Hygiene articles comprising a hydrogel according to either of claims 1 and 2.
- 5 16. Mixtures of products prepared according to any one of claims 3 to 11 with biocidal, antimicrobial and/or antibacterial materials and/or perfume or scent materials, stabilizers, dyes, pH indicators and/or other auxiliaries.